

her journey, her husband, whose spirits always rose with the prospect of action, issued his orders to Whitaker to get together a few stout fellows, with back and breast-pieces, and steel-caps. "There are the two lackeys, and Outram and Saunders, besides the other groom fellow, and Roger Raine, and his son; but bid Roger not come drunk again;—thyself, young Dick of the Dale and his servant, and a file or two of the tenants,—we shall be enough for any force they can make. All these are fellows that will strike hard, and ask no question why—their hands are ever readier than their tongues, and their mouths are more made for drinking than speaking."

Whitaker, apprised of the necessity of the case, asked if he should not warn Sir Jasper Cranbourne.

"Not a word to him, as you live," said the Knight; "this may be an outlawry, as they call it, for what I know; and therefore I will bring no lands or tenements into peril, saving mine own. Sir Jasper hath had a troublesome time of it for many a year. By my will, he shall sit quiet for the rest of's days."

#### CHAPTER VII.

*Fang.—A rescue! a rescue!*

*Mrs. Quickly.—Good people, bring a rescue or two.*

HENRY IV. Part I.

THE followers of Peveril were so well accustomed to the sound of "Boot and Saddle," that they were soon mounted and in order; and in all the form, and with some of the dignity of danger, proceeded to escort the Countess of Derby through the hilly and desert tract of country which connects the frontier of the shire with the neighboring county of Cheshire. The cavalcade moved with considerable precaution, which they had been taught by the discipline of the Civil Wars. One wary and well-mounted trooper rode about two hundred yards in advance; followed, at about half that distance, by two more, with their carbines advanced, as if ready for action. About one hundred yards behind the advance, came the main body; where the Countess of Derby, mounted on Lady Peveril's ambling palfrey (for her own had been exhausted by the journey from London to Martindale Castle), accompanied by one groom, of approved fidelity, and one waiting-maid, was attended and guarded by the Knight of the Peak, and three files of good and practised horsemen. In the rear came Whitaker, with Lance Outram, as men of especial trust, to whom the covering the retreat was confided. They rode, as the Spanish proverb expresses it, "with the beard on the shoulder," looking around, that is, from time to time, and using every precaution to have the speediest knowledge of any pursuit which might take place.

But, however wise in discipline, Peveril and his followers were somewhat remiss in civil policy. The Knight had communicated to Whitaker, though without any apparent necessity, the

precise nature of their present expedition; and Whitaker was equally communicative to his comrade Lance, the keeper. "It is strange enough, Master Whitaker," said the latter, when he had heard the case, "and I wish you, being a wise man, would expound it;—why, when we have been wishing for the King—and praying for the King—and fighting for the King—and dying for the King, for these twenty years, the first thing we find to do on his return, is to get into harness to resist his warrant?"

"Pooh! you silly fellow," said Whitaker, "that is all you know of the true bottom of our quarrel! Why, man, we fought for the King's person against his warrant, all along from the very beginning; for I remember the rogues' proclamations, and so forth, always ran in the name of the King and Parliament."

"Ay! was it even so?" replied Lance. "Nay, then, if they begin the old game so soon again, and send out warrants in the King's name against his loyal subjects, well fare our stout knight, say I, who is ready to take them down in their stocking-soles. And if Bridgenorth takes the chase after us, I shall not be sorry to have a knock at him for one."

"Why, the man, bating he is a pestilent Roundhead and Puritan," said Whitaker, "is no bad neighbor. What has he done to thee, man?"

"He has poached on the manor," answered the keeper.

"The devil he has!" replied Whitaker. "Thou must be jesting, Lance. Bridgenorth is neither hunter nor hawk; he hath not so much of honesty in him."

"Ay, but he runs after game you little think of, with his sour, melancholy face, that would scare babes and curdle milk," answered Lance.

"Thou canst not mean the wenches?" said Whitaker; "why, he hath been melancholy mad with moping for the death of his wife. Thou knowest our lady took the child, for fear he should strangle it for putting him in mind of its mother, in some of his tantrums. Under her favor, and among friends, there are many poor Cavaliers' children, that care would be better bestowed upon—But to thy tale."

"Why, thus it runs," said Lance. "I think you may have noticed, Master Whitaker, that a certain Mistress Deborah hath manifested a certain favor for a certain person in a certain household."

"For thyself, to wit," answered Whitaker; "Lance Outram, thou art the vainest coxcomb—"

"Coxcomb?" said Lance; "why, 'twas but last night the whole family saw her, as one would say, fling herself at my head."

"I would she had been a brick-bat, then, to have broken it, for thy impertinence and conceit," said the steward.

"Well, but do but hearken. The next morning—that is, this very blessed morning—I thought of going to lodge a buck in the park, judging a bit of venison might be wanted in the larder. Af-

ter yesterday's wassail; and, as I passed under the nursery window, I did but just look up to see what madam governante was about; and so I saw her, through the casement, whip on her hood and scarf as soon as she had a glimpse of me. Immediately after I saw the still-room door open, and made sure she was coming through the garden, and so over the breach and down to the park; and so, thought I, 'Aha, Mistress Deb, if you are so ready to dance after my pipe and tabor, I will give you a couranto before you shall come up with me.' And so I went down Ivy-tod Dingle, where the copse is tangled, and the ground swampy, and round by Haxley-bottom, thinking all the while she was following, and laughing in my sleeve at the round I was giving her."

"You deserved to be ducked for it," said Whitaker, "for a weather-headed puppy; but what is all this Jack-a-lantern story to Bridgenorth?"

"Why, it was all along of he, man," continued Lance, "that is, of Bridgenorth, that she did not follow me—Gad, I first walked slow, and then stopped, and then turned back a little, and then began to wonder what she had made of herself, and to think I had borne myself something like a jacksass in the matter."

"That I deny," said Whitaker, "never Jack-ass but would have borne him better—but go on."

"Why, turning my face towards the Castle, I went back as if I had my nose bleeding, when just by the Copely thorn, which stands, you know, a flight-shot from the postern-gate, I saw Madam Deb in close conference with the enemy."

"What enemy?" said the steward.

"What enemy! why, who but Bridgenorth? They kept out of sight, and among the copse; but, thought I, it is hard if I cannot stalk you, that have stalked so many bucks. If so, I had better give my shafts to be pudding pins. So I cast round the thicket, to watch their waters; and may I never bend crossbow again, if I did not see him give her gold, and squeeze her by the hand!"

"And was that all you saw pass between them?" said the steward.

"Faith, and it was enough to dismount me from my hobby," said Lance. "What! when I thought I had the prettiest girl in the Castle dancing after my whistle, to find that she gave me the bag to hold, and was smuggling in a corner with a rich old Puritan!"

"Credit me, Lance, it is not as thou thinkest," said Whitaker. "Bridgenorth cares not for these amorous toys, and thou thinkest of nothing else. But it is fitting our Knight should know that he has met with Deborah in secret, and given her gold; for never Puritan gave gold yet, but it was earnest for some devil's work done, or to be done."

"Nay, but," said Lance, "I would not be such a dog-bolt as to go and betray the girl to our master. She hath a right to follow her fancy, as the dame said who kissed her cow—only I do not

much approve her choice, that is all. He cannot be six years short of fifty; and a verjuice countenance, under the penthouse of a slouched beaver, and bag of meagre dried bones, swaddled up in a black cloak, is no such temptation, methinks."

"I tell you, once more," said Whitaker, "you are mistaken; and that there neither is, nor can be, any matter of love between them, but only some intrigue, concerning, perhaps, this same noble Countess of Derby. I tell thee, it behoves my master to know it, and I will presently tell it to him."

So saying, and in spite of all the remonstrances which Lance continued to make on behalf of Mistress Deborah, the steward rode up to the main body of their little party, and mentioned to the Knight, and the Countess of Derby, what he had just heard from the keeper, adding at the same time his own suspicions, that Master Bridgenorth of Moultrassie-Hall was desirous to keep up some system of espial in the Castle of Martindale, either in order to secure his menaced vengeance on the Countess of Derby, as authoress of his brother-in-law's death, or for some unknown, but probably sinister purpose.

The Knight of the Peak was filled with high resentment at Whitaker's communication. According to his prejudices, those of the opposite faction were supposed to make up by wit and intrigue what they wanted in open force; and he now hastily conceived that his neighbor, whose prudence he always respected, and sometimes even dreaded, was maintaining, for his private purposes, a clandestine correspondence with a member of his family. If this was for the betrayal of his noble guest, it argued at once treachery and presumption; or, viewing the whole as Lance had done, a criminal intrigue with a woman so near the person of Lady Peveril, was in itself, he deemed, a piece of sovereign impertinence and disrespect on the part of such a person as Bridgenorth, against whom Sir Geoffrey's anger was kindled accordingly.

Whitaker had scarce regained his post in the rear, when he again quitted it and galloped to the main body with more speed than before, with the displeasing tidings that they were pursued by half a score of horsemen, and better.

"Ride on briskly to Hartley-nick," said the Knight, "and there, with God to help, we will bide the knaves.—Countess of Derby—one word and a short one—Farewell!—you must ride forward with Whitaker and another careful fellow, and let me alone to see that no one treads on your skirts."

"I will abide with you and stand them," said the Countess; "you know of old, I fear not to look on man's work."

"You must ride on, madam," said the Knight, "for the sake of the young Earl, and the rest of my noble friend's family. There is no manly work which can be worth your looking upon; it is but child's play that these fellows bring with them."



As she yielded a reluctant consent to continue her flight, they reached the bottom of Hartley-nick, a pass very steep and craggy, and where the road, or rather path, which had hitherto passed over more open ground, became pent up and confined, betwixt copsewood on the one side, and, on the other, the precipitous bank of a mountain stream.

The Countess of Derby, after an affectionate adieu to Sir Geoffrey, and having requested him to convey her kind commendations to her little page-elect and his mother, proceeded up the pass at a round pace, and with her attendants and escort, was soon out of sight. Immediately after she had disappeared, the pursuers came up with Sir Geoffrey Peveril, who had divided and drawn up his party so as completely to occupy the road at three different points.

The opposite party was led, as Sir Geoffrey had expected, by Major Bridgenorth. At his side was a person in black, with a silver greyhound on his arm; and he was followed by about eight or ten inhabitants of the village of Martindale-Moultrassie, two or three of whom were officers of the peace, and others were personally known to Sir Geoffrey as favorers of the subverted government.

As the party rode briskly up, Sir Geoffrey called to them to halt; and as they continued advancing, he ordered his own people to present their pistols and carabines; and after assuming that menacing attitude, he repeated, with a voice of thunder, "Halt, or we fire!"

The other party halted accordingly, and Major Bridgenorth advanced, as if to parley.

"Why, how now, neighbor," said Sir Geoffrey, as if he had at that moment recognised him for the first time,—"what makes you ride so sharp this morning? Are you not afraid to harm your horse, or spoil your spurs?"

"Sir Geoffrey," said the Major, "I have no time for jesting—I am on the King's affairs."

"Are you sure it is not upon Old Noll's, neighbor? You used to hold his the better errand," said the Knight, with a smile which gave occasion to a horse-laugh among his followers.

"Show him your warrant," said Bridgenorth to the man in black formerly mentioned, who was a pursuivant. Then taking the warrant from the officer, he gave it to Sir Geoffrey—"To this, at least, you will pay regard."

"The same regard which you would have paid to it a month back or so," said the Knight, tearing the warrant to shreds.—"What a plague do you stare at? Do you think you have a monopoly of rebellion, and that we have not a right to show a trick of disobedience in our turn?"

"Make way, Sir Geoffrey Peveril," said Bridgenorth, "or you will compel me to do that I may be sorry for. I am in this matter the avenger of the blood of one of the Lord's saints, and I will follow the chase while Heaven grants me an arm to make my way."

"You shall make no way here but at your

peril," said Sir Geoffrey; "this is my ground—I have been harassed enough for these twenty years by saints, as you call yourselves. I tell you, master, you shall neither violate the security of my house, nor pursue my friends over the grounds, nor tamper, as you have done, amongst my servants, with impunity. I have had you in respect for certain kind doings, which I will not either forget or deny, and you will find it difficult to make me draw a sword or bend a pistol against you; but offer any hostile movement, or presume to advance a foot, and I will make sure of you presently. And for these rascals, who come hither to annoy a noble lady on my bounds, unless you draw them off, I will presently send some of them to the devil before their time."

"Make room at your proper peril," said Major Bridgenorth; and he put his right hand on his holster-pistol. Sir Geoffrey closed with him instantly, seized him by the collar, and spatted Black Hastings, checking him at the same time, so that the horse made a courbette, and brought the full weight of his chest against the counter of the other. A ready soldier might, in Bridgenorth's situation, have rid himself of his adversary with a bullet. But Bridgenorth's courage, notwithstanding his having served some time with the Parliament army, was rather of a civil than a military character; and he was inferior to his adversary, not only in strength and horsemanship, but also and especially in the daring and decisive resolution which made Sir Geoffrey thrust himself readily into personal contest. While, therefore, they tugged and grappled together upon terms which bore such little accordance with their long acquaintance and close neighborhood, it was no wonder that Bridgenorth should be unhorsed with much violence. While Sir Geoffrey sprang from the saddle, the party of Bridgenorth advanced to rescue their leader, and that of the Knight to oppose them. Swords were unsheathed, and pistols presented; but Sir Geoffrey, with the voice of a herald, commanded both parties to stand back, and to keep the peace.

The pursuivant took the hint, and easily found a reason for not prosecuting a dangerous duty. "The warrant," he said, "was destroyed. They that did it must be answerable to the Council; for his part, he could proceed no farther without his commission."

"Well said, and like a peaceable fellow!" said Sir Geoffrey.—"Let him have refreshment at the Castle—his nag is sorely out of condition.—Come, neighbor Bridgenorth, get up, man—I trust you have had no hurt in this mad affray? I was loath to lay hand on you, man, till you plucked out your petronel."

As he spoke thus, he aided the Major to rise. The pursuivant, meanwhile, drew aside; and with him the constable and head-borough, who were not without some tacit suspicion, that though Peveril was interrupting the direct course of law in this matter, yet he was likely to have his offence considered by favorable judges; and

therefore it might be as much for their interest and safety to give way as to oppose him. But the rest of the party, friends of Bridgenorth, and of his principles, kept their ground notwithstanding this defection, and seemed, from their looks, sternly determined to rule their conduct by that of their leader, whatever it might be.

But it was evident that Bridgenorth did not intend to renew the struggle. He shook himself rather roughly free from the hands of Sir Geoffrey Peveril; but it was not to draw his sword. On the contrary, he mounted his horse with a sullen and dejected air; and, making a sign to his followers, turned back the same road which he had come. Sir Geoffrey looked after him for some minutes. "Now, there goes a man," said he, "who would have been a right honest fellow had he not been a Presbyterian. But there is no heartiness about them—they can never forgive a fair fall upon the sod—they bear malice, and that I hate as I do a black cloak, or a Geneva skull-cap, and a pair of long ears rising on each side on't, like two chimneys at the gable ends of a thatched cottage. They are as sly as the devil to boot; and, therefore, Lance Outram, take two with you, and keep after them, that they may not turn our flank, and get on the track of the Countess again after all."

"I had as soon they should course my lady's white tame doe," answered Lance, in the spirit of his calling. He proceeded to execute his master's orders by dogging Major Bridgenorth at a distance, and observing his course from such heights as commanded the country. But it was soon evident that no manœuvre was intended, and that the Major was taking the direct road homeward. When this was ascertained, Sir Geoffrey dismissed most of his followers; and retaining only his own domestics, rode hastily forward to overtake the Countess.

It is only necessary to say farther, that he completed his purpose of escorting the Countess of Derby to Vale-Royal, without meeting any farther hindrance by the way. The lord of the mansion readily undertook to conduct the high-minded lady to Liverpool, and the task of seeing her safely embarked for her son's hereditary dominions, where there was no doubt of her remaining in personal safety until the accusation against her for breach of the Royal Indemnity, by the execution of Christian, could be brought to some compromise.

For a length of time this was no easy matter. Clarendon, then at the head of Charles's administration, considered her rash action, though dictated by motives which the human breast must, in some respects, sympathize with, as calculated to shake the restored tranquillity of England, by exciting the doubts and jealousies of those who had to apprehend the consequences of what is called, in our own time, a *reaction*. At the same time, the high services of this distinguished family—the merits of the Countess herself—the memory of her gallant husband—and the very pecu-

liar circumstances of jurisdiction which took the case out of all common rules, pleaded strongly in her favor; and the death of Christian was at length only punished by the imposition of a heavy fine, amounting, we believe, to many thousand pounds; which was levied, with great difficulty, out of the shattered estates of the young Earl of Derby.

## CHAPTER VIII.

My native land, good-night!  
BYRON.

LADY PEVERIL remained in no small anxiety for several hours after her husband and the Countess had departed from Martindale Castle; more especially when she learned that Major Bridgenorth, concerning whose motions she made private inquiry, had taken horse with a party, and was gone to the westward in the same direction with Sir Geoffrey.

At length her immediate uneasiness in regard to the safety of her husband and the Countess was removed, by the arrival of Whitaker, with her husband's commendations, and an account of the scuffle betwixt himself and Major Bridgenorth.

Lady Peveril shuddered to see how nearly they had approached to renewal of the scenes of civil discord; and while she was thankful to Heaven for her husband's immediate preservation, she could not help feeling both regret and apprehension for the consequences of his quarrel with Major Bridgenorth. They had now lost an old friend, who had showed himself such under those circumstances of adversity by which friendship is most severely tried; and she could not disguise from herself, that Bridgenorth, thus irritated, might be a troublesome, if not a dangerous enemy. His rights as a creditor, he had hitherto used with gentleness; but if he should employ rigor, Lady Peveril, whose attention to domestic economy had made her much better acquainted with her husband's affairs than he was himself, foresaw considerable inconvenience from the measures which the law put in his power. She comforted herself with the recollection, however, that she had still a strong hold on Bridgenorth, through his paternal affection, and from the fixed opinion which he had hitherto manifested, that his daughter's health could only flourish while under her charge. But any expectations of reconciliation which Lady Peveril might probably have founded on this circumstance, were frustrated by an incident which took place in the course of the following morning.

The governante, Mistress Deborah, who has been already mentioned, went forth, as usual, with the children, to take their morning exercise in the Park, attended by Rachel, a girl who acted occasionally as her assistant in attending upon them. But not as usual did she return. It was near the hour of breakfast, when Ellesmere, with



an unwonted degree of primness in her mouth and manner, came to acquaint her lady that Mistress Deborah had not thought proper to come back from the Park, though the breakfast hour approached so near.

"She will come, 'hen, presently," said Lady Peveril, with indifference.

Ellesmere gave a short and doubtful cough, and then proceeded to say, that Rachel had been sent home with little Master Julian, and that Mistress Deborah had been pleased to say, she would walk on with Miss Bridgenorth as far as Moultrassie Holt; which was a point at which the property of the Major, as matters now stood, bounded that of Sir Geoffrey Peveril.

"Is the wench turned silly," exclaimed the lady, something angrily, "that she does not obey my orders, and return at regular hours?"

"She may be turning silly," said Ellesmere, mysteriously; "or she may be turning too sly; and I think it were as well your ladyship looked to it."

"Looked to what, Ellesmere?" said the lady, impatiently. "You are strangely oracular this morning. If you know any thing to the prejudice of this young woman, I pray you speak it out."

"I prejudice!" said Ellesmere; "I scorn to prejudice man, woman, or child, in the way of a fellow-servant; only I wish your ladyship to look about you, and use your own eyes—that is all."

"You bid me use my own eyes, Ellesmere; but I suspect," answered the lady, "you would be better pleased were I contented to see through your spectacles. I charge you—and you know I will be obeyed—I charge you to tell me what you know or suspect about this girl, Deborah Debbitch."

"I see through spectacles!" exclaimed the indignant Abigail; "your ladyship will pardon me in that, for I never use them, unless a pair that belonged to my poor mother, which I put on when your ladyship wants your pinner's curiously wrought. No woman above sixteen ever did white-seam without barnacles. And then as to suspecting, I suspect nothing; for as your ladyship hath taken Mistress Deborah Debbitch from under my hand, to be sure it is neither bread nor butter of mine. Only" (here she began to speak with her lips shut, so as scarce to permit a sound to issue, and mincing her words as if she pinched off the ends of them before she suffered them to escape),—"only, madam, if Mistress Deborah goes so often of a morning to Moultrassie Holt, why, I should not be surprised if she should never find the way back again."

"Once more, what do you mean, Ellesmere? You were wont to have some sense—let me know distinctly what the matter is."

"Only, madam," pursued the Abigail, "that since Bridgenorth came back from Chesterfield, and saw you at the Castle Hall, Mistress Deborah has been pleased to carry the children every morning to that place: and it has so happened that she has often met the Major, as they call him, there

in his walks; for he can walk about now like other folks; and I warrant you she hath not been the worse of the meeting—one way at least, for she hath bought a new hood might serve yourself, madam; but whether she hath had any thing in hand besides a piece of money, no doubt your ladyship is best judge."

Lady Peveril, who readily adopted the more good-natured construction of the governante's motives, could not help laughing at the idea of a man of Bridgenorth's precise appearance, strict principles, and reserved habits, being suspected of a design of gallantry; and readily concluded, that Mistress Deborah had found her advantage in gratifying his parental affection by a frequent sight of his daughter during the few days which intervened betwixt his first seeing little Alice at the Castle, and the events which had followed. But she was somewhat surprised, when an hour after the usual breakfast hour, during which neither the child nor Mistress Deborah appeared, Major Bridgenorth's only man-servant arrived at the Castle on horseback, dressed as for a journey; and having delivered a letter addressed to herself, and another to Mistress Ellesmere, rode away without waiting any answer.

There would have been nothing remarkable in this, had any other person been concerned; but Major Bridgenorth was so very quiet and orderly in all his proceedings—so little liable to act hastily or by impulse, that the least appearance of bustle, where he was concerned, excited surprise and curiosity.

Lady Peveril broke her letter hastily open, and found that it contained the following lines:—

*"For the Hands of the Honorable and Honored Lady Peveril—These:*

*"MADAM—Please it your Ladyship,*

*"I write more to excuse myself to your ladyship, than to accuse either you or others, in respect that I am sensible it becomes our frail nature better to confess our own imperfections, than to complain of those of others. Neither do I mean to speak of past times, particularly in respect of your worthy ladyship, being sensible that if I have served you in that period when our Israel might be called triumphant, you have more than requited me, in giving to my arms a child, redeemed, as it were, from the vale of the shadow of death. And therefore, as I heartily forgive to your ladyship the unkind and violent measure which you dealt to me at our last meeting (seeing that the woman who was the cause of strife is accounted one of your kindred people), I do entreat you in like manner, to pardon my enticing away from your service the young woman called Deborah Debbitch, whose nurture, instructed as she hath been under your ladyship's direction, is, it may be, indispensable to the health of my dear child. I had purposed, madam, with your gracious permission, that Alice should have remained at Martindale Castle, under your kind charge, until she could so far discern betwixt good*

and evil, that it should be matter of conscience to teach her the way in which she should go. For it is not unknown to your ladyship, and in no way do I speak it reproachfully, but rather sorrowfully, that a person so excellently gifted as yourself—I mean touching natural qualities—has not yet received that true light, which is a lamp to the paths, but are contented to stumble in darkness, and among the graves of dead men. It has been my prayer in the watches of the night, that your ladyship should cease from the doctrine which causeth to err; but I grieve to say, that our candlestick being about to be removed, the land will most likely be involved in deeper darkness than ever; and the return of the King, to which I and many looked forward as a manifestation of divine favor, seems to prove little else than a permitted triumph of the Prince of the Air, who setteth about to restore his Vanity-fair of Bishops, deans, and such like, extruding the peaceful ministers of the word, whose labors have proved faithful to many hungry souls. So, hearing from a sure hand, that commission has gone forth to restore these dumb dogs, the followers of Land and of Williams, who were cast forth by the late Parliament, and that an Act of Conformity, or rather of deformity, of worship, was to be expected, it is my purpose to flee from the wrath to come, and to seek some corner where I may dwell in peace, and enjoy liberty of conscience. For who would abide in the Sanctuary, after the carved work thereof is broken down, and when it hath been made a place for owls, and satyrs of the wilderness?—And herein I blame myself, madam, that I went in the singleness of my heart too readily into that carousing in the house of feasting, wherein my love of union, and my desire to show respect to your ladyship, were made a snare to me. But I trust it will be an atonement, that I am now about to absent myself from the place of my birth, and the house of my fathers, as well as from the place which holdeth the dust of those pledges of my affection. I have also to remember, that in this land my honor (after the worldly estimation) hath been abated, and my utility circumscribed, by your husband, Sir Geoffrey Peveril; and that without any chance of my obtaining reparation at his hand, whereby I may say the hand of a kinsman was lifted up against my credit and my life. These things are bitter to the taste of the old Adam; wherefore to prevent farther bickerings, and, it may be, bloodshed, it is better that I leave this land for a time. The affairs which remain to be settled between Sir Geoffrey and myself, I shall place in the hand of the righteous Master Joachin Win-the-Fight, an attorney in Chester, who will arrange them with such attention to Sir Geoffrey's convenience, as justice, and the due exercise of the law, will permit; for, as I trust I shall have grace to resist the temptation to make the weapons of carnal warfare the instruments of my revenge, so I scorn to effect it through the means of Mammon. Wishing, madam, that the Lord may grant you every blessing, and, in

especial, that which is over all others, namely, the true knowledge of His way,  
"I remain,  
"Your devoted servant to command,  
"RALPH BRIDGENORTH.

*"Written at Moultrassie-Hall, this tenth day of July, 1680."*

So soon as Lady Peveril had perused this long and singular homily, in which it seemed to her that her neighbor showed more spirit of religious fanaticism than she could have supposed him possessed of, she looked up and beheld Ellesmere,—with a countenance in which mortification, and an affected air of contempt, seemed to struggle together,—who, tired with watching the expression of her mistress's countenance, applied for confirmation of her suspicions in plain terms.

"I suppose, madam," said the waiting-woman, "the fanatic fool intends to marry the wench? They say he goes to shift the country. Truly it's time, indeed; for, besides that the whole neighborhood would laugh him to scorn, I should not be surprised if Lance Outram, the keeper, gave him a buck's head to bear; for that is all in the way of his office."

"There is no great occasion for your spite at present, Ellesmere," replied her lady. "My letter says nothing of marriage; but it would appear that Master Bridgenorth, being to leave this country, has engaged Deborah to take care of his child; and I am sure I am heartily glad of it, for the infant's sake."

"And I am glad of it for my own," said Ellesmere; "and, indeed, for the sake of the whole house. And your ladyship thinks she is not like to be married to him? Troth, I could never see how he should be such an idiot; but perhaps she is going to do worse; for she speaks here of coming to high preferment, and that scarce comes by honest servitude now-a-days; then she writes me about sending her things, as if I were mistress of the wardrobe to her ladyship—ay, and recommends Master Julian to the care of my age and experience, forsooth, as if she needed to recommend the dear little jewel to me; and then, to speak of my age—But I will bundle away her rags to the Hall, with a witness!"

"Do it with all civility," said the lady, "and let Whitaker send her the wages for which she has served, and a broad-piece over and above; for though a light-headed young woman, she was kind to the children."

"I know who is kind to their servants, madam, and would spoil the best ever pinned a gown."

"I spoiled a good one, Ellesmere, when I spoiled thee," said the lady; "but tell Mrs. Deborah to kiss the little Alice for me, and to offer my good wishes to Major Bridgenorth for his temporal and future happiness."

She permitted no observation or reply, but dismissed her attendant, without entering into farther particulars.



When Ellesmere had withdrawn, Lady Peveril began to reflect, with much feeling of compassion, on the letter of Major Bridgenorth; a person in whom there were certainly many excellent qualities, but whom a series of domestic misfortunes, and the increasing gloom of a sincere, yet stern feeling of devotion, rendered lonely and unhappy; and she had more than one anxious thought for the happiness of the little Alice, brought up, as she was likely to be, under such a father. Still the removal of Bridgenorth was, on the whole, a desirable event; for while he remained at the Hall, it was but too likely that some accidental collision with Sir Geoffrey might give rise to a rencontre betwixt them, more fatal than the last had been.

In the meanwhile, she could not help expressing to Doctor Dummerar her surprise and sorrow, that all which she had done and attempted, to establish peace and unanimity betwixt the contending factions, had been perversely fated to turn out the very reverse of what she had aimed at.

"But for my unhappy invitation," she said, "Bridgenorth would not have been at the Castle on the morning which succeeded the feast, would not have seen the Countess, and would not have incurred the resentment and opposition of my husband. And but for the King's return, an event which was so anxiously expected as the termination of all our calamities, neither the noble lady nor ourselves had been engaged in this new path of difficulty and danger."

"Honored madam," said Doctor Dummerar, "were the affairs of this world to be guided implicitly by human wisdom, or were they uniformly to fall out according to the conjectures of human foresight, events would no longer be under the domination of that time and chance, which happen unto all men, since we should, in the one case, work out our own purposes to a certainty, by our own skill, and in the other, regulate our conduct according to the views of unerring prescience. But man is, while in this vale of tears, like an uninstructed bowler, so to speak, who thinks to attain the jack, by delivering his bowl straight forward upon it, being ignorant that there is a concealed bias within the spheroid, which will make it, in all probability, swerve away, and lose the cast."

Having spoken this with a sententious air, the Doctor took his shovel-shaped hat, and went down to the Castle green, to conclude a match of bowls with Whitaker which had probably suggested this notable illustration of the uncertain course of human events.

Two days afterwards, Sir Geoffrey arrived. He had waited at Vale-Royal till he heard of the Countess's being safely embarked for Man, and then had posted homeward to his Castle and Dame Margaret. On his way, he learned from some of his attendants, the mode in which his lady had conducted the entertainment which she had given to the neighborhood at his order; and

notwithstanding the great deference he usually showed in cases where Lady Peveril was concerned, he heard of her liberality towards the Presbyterian party with great indignation.

"I could have admitted Bridgenorth," he said, "for he always bore him in neighborly and kindly fashion till this last career—I could have endured him, so he would have drunk the King's health, like a true man—but to bring that snuffling scoundrel Solsgrace, with all his beggarly, long-eared congregation, to hold a conventicle in my father's house—to let them domineer it as they listed—why, I would not have permitted them such liberty, when they held their head the highest! They never, in the worst of times, found any way into Martindale Castle but what Noll's cannon made for them; and, that they should come and cant there, when good King Charles is returned—By my hand, Dame Margaret shall hear of it!"

But, notwithstanding these ireful resolutions, resentment altogether subsided in the honest Knight's breast, when he saw the fair features of his lady lightened with affectionate joy at his return in safety. As he took her in his arms and kissed her, he forgave her ere he mentioned her offence.

"Thou hast played the knave with me, Meg," he said, shaking his head, and smiling at the same time, "and thou knowest in what manner; but I think thou art true churchwoman, and didst only act from some silly womanish fancy of keeping fair with these roguish Roundheads. But let me have no more of this. I had rather Martindale Castle were again rent by their bullets, than receive any of the knaves in the way of friendship—I always except Ralph Bridgenorth of the Hall, if he should come to his senses again."

Lady Peveril was here under the necessity of explaining what she had heard of Master Bridgenorth—the disappearance of the governante with his daughter, and placed Bridgenorth's letter in his hand. Sir Geoffrey shook his head at first, and then laughed extremely, at the idea that there was some little love-intrigue between Bridgenorth and Mistress Deborah.

"It is the true end of a dissenter," he said, "to marry his own maid-servant, or some other person's. Deborah is a good likely wench, and on the merrier side of thirty, as I should think."

"Nay, nay," said the Lady Peveril, "you are as uncharitable as Ellesmere—I believe it but to be affection to his child."

"Pshaw! pshaw!" answered the Knight, "women are eternally thinking of children; but among men, dame, many one caresses the infant that he may kiss the child's maid; and where's the wonder or the harm either, if Bridgenorth should marry the wench? Her father is a substantial yeoman; his family has had the same farm since Bosworthfield—as good a pedigree as that of the great-grandson of a Chesterfield brewer, I trow. But let us hear what he says

for himself—I shall spell it out if there is any roguery in the letter about love and liking, though it might escape your innocence, Dame Margaret."

The knight of the Peak began to peruse the letter accordingly, but was much embarrassed by the peculiar language in which it was couched. "What he means by moving of candlesticks, and breaking down of carved work in the church, I cannot guess; unless he means to bring back the large silver candlesticks which my grandsire gave to be placed on the altar at Martindale-Moultrasie; and which his crop-eared friends, like sacrilegious villains as they are, stole and melted down. And in like manner, the only breaking I know of, was when they pulled down the rails of the communion table (for which some of their fingers are hot enough by this time), and when the brass ornaments were torn down from the Peveril monuments; and that was breaking and removing with a vengeance. However, dame, the upshot is, that poor Bridgenorth is going to leave the neighborhood. I am truly sorry for it, though I never saw him oftener than once-a-day, and never spoke to him above two words. But I see how it is—that little shake by the shoulder sticks in his stomach; and yet, Meg, I did but lift him out of the saddle as I might have lifted thee into it, Margaret—I was careful not to hurt him; and I did not think him so tender in point of honor as to mind such a thing much; but I see plainly where his sore lies; and I warrant you I will manage that he stays at the Hall, and that you get back Julian's little companion. Faith, I am sorry myself at the thought of losing the baby, and of having to choose another ride when it is not hunting weather, than round by the Hall, with a word at the window."

"I should be very glad, Sir Geoffrey," said Lady Peveril, "that you could come to a reconciliation with this worthy man, for such I must hold Master Bridgenorth to be."

"But for his dissenting principles, as good a neighbor as ever lived," said Sir Geoffrey.

"But I scarce see," continued the lady, "any possibility of bringing about a conclusion so desirable."

"Tush, dame," answered the Knight, "thou knowest little of such matters. I know the foot he halts upon, and you shall see him go as sound as ever."

Lady Peveril had, from her sincere affection and sound sense, as good a right to claim the full confidence of her husband, as any woman in Derbyshire; and, upon this occasion, to confess the truth, she had more anxiety to know his purpose than her sense of their mutual and separate duties permitted her in general to entertain. She could not imagine what mode of reconciliation with his neighbor, Sir Geoffrey (no very acute judge of mankind or their peculiarities) could have devised, which might not be disclosed to her; and she felt some secret anxiety lest the means resorted to might be so ill chosen as to render the breach

rather wider. But Sir Geoffrey would give no opening for farther inquiry. He had been long enough colonel of a regiment abroad, to value himself on the right of absolute command at home; and to all the hints which his lady's ingenuity could devise and throw out, he only answered, "Patience, Dame Margaret, patience. This is no case for thy handling. Thou shalt know enough on't by and by, dame.—Go, look to Julian. Will the boy never have done crying for lack of that little sprout of a Roundhead? But we will have little Alice back with us in two or three days, and all will be well again."

As the good Knight spoke these words, a post winded his horn in the court, and a large packet was brought in, addressed to the worshipful Sir Geoffrey Peveril, Justice of the Peace, and so forth; for he had been placed in authority so soon as the King's Restoration was put upon a settled basis. Upon opening the packet, which he did with no small feeling of importance, he found that it contained the warrant which he had solicited for replacing Doctor Dummerar in the parish, from which he had been forcibly ejected during the usurpation.\*

Few incidents could have given more delight to Sir Geoffrey. He could forgive a stout able-bodied sectary or non-conformist, who enforced his doctrines in the field by downright blows on the casques and cuirasses of himself and other Cavaliers. But he remembered with most vindictive accuracy, the triumphant entrance of Hugh Peters through the breach of his Castle; and for his sake, without nicely distinguishing betwixt sects or their teachers, he held all who mounted a pulpit without warrant from the Church of England—perhaps he might also in private except that of Rome—to be disturbers of the public tranquillity—seducers of the congregation from their lawful preachers—instigators of the late Civil War—and men well disposed to risk the fate of a new one.

Then, on the other hand, besides gratifying his dislike to Solsgrace, he saw much satisfaction in the task of replacing his old friend and associate in sport and in danger, the worthy Doctor Dummerar, in his legitimate rights, and in the ease and comforts of his vicarage. He communicated the contents of the packet, with great triumph, to the lady, who now perceived the sense of the mysterious paragraph in Major Bridgenorth's letter, concerning the removal of the candlestick, and the extinction of light and doctrine in the land. She pointed this out to Sir Geoffrey, and endeavored to persuade him that a door was now opened to reconciliation with his neighbor, by

\* The ejection of the Presbyterian clergy took place on Saint Bartholomew's day, thence called Black Bartholomew. Two thousand Presbyterian pastors were on that day displaced and silenced throughout England. The preachers indeed had only the alternative to renounce their principles, or subscribe certain articles of uniformity. And to their great honor, Calamy Baxter, and Reynolds, refused bishoprics, and many other Presbyterian ministers declined deaneries and other preferments, and submitted to deprivation in preference.



executing the commission which he had received in an easy and moderate manner, after due delay, and with all respect to the feelings both of Solsgrace and his congregation, which circumstances admitted of. This, the lady argued, would be doing no injury whatever to Doctor Dummerar;—nay, might be the means of reconciling many to his ministry, who might otherwise be disgusted with it for ever, by the premature expulsion of a favorite preacher.

There was much wisdom, as well as moderation, in this advice; and, at another time, Sir Geoffrey would have had sense enough to have adopted it. But who can act composedly or prudently in the hour of triumph? The ejection of Mr. Solsgrace was so hastily executed, as to give it some appearance of persecution; though, more justly considered, it was the restoring of his predecessor to his legal rights. Solsgrace himself seemed to be desirous to make his sufferings as manifest as possible. He held out to the last; and on the Sabbath after he had received intimation of his ejection, attempted to make his way to the pulpit, as usual, supported by Master Bridgenorth's attorney, Win-the-Fight, and a few zealous followers.

Just as this party came into the churchyard on the one side, Doctor Dummerar, dressed in full pontificals, in a sort of triumphal procession, accompanied by Peveril of the Peak, Sir Jasper Cranbourne, and other Cavaliers of distinction, entered at the other.

To prevent an actual struggle in the church, the parish officers were sent to prevent the farther approach of the Presbyterian minister; which was effected without farther damage than a broken head, inflicted by Roger Raine, the drunken innkeeper of the Peveril Arms, upon the Presbyterian attorney of Chesterfield.

Unsubdued in spirit, though compelled to retreat by superior force, the undaunted Mr. Solsgrace retired to the vicarage; where, under some legal pretext which had been started by Mr. Win-the-Fight (in that day unaptly named), he attempted to maintain himself—bolted gates—barred windows—and, as report said (though falsely), made provision of fire-arms to resist the officers. A scene of clamor and scandal accordingly took place, which being reported to Sir Geoffrey, he came in person, with some of his attendants carrying arms—forced the outer-gate and inner-doors of the house; and proceeding to the study, found no other garrison save the Presbyterian parson, with the attorney, who gave up possession of the premises, after making protestation against the violence that had been used.

The rabble of the village being by this time all in motion, Sir Geoffrey, both in prudence and in good-nature, saw the propriety of escorting his prisoners, for so they might be termed, safely through the tumult; and accordingly conveyed them in person, through much noise and clamor, as far as the avenue of Moultrassie-Hall, which they chose for the place of their retreat.

But the absence of Sir Geoffrey gave the rein to some disorders, which, if present, he would assuredly have restrained. Some of the minister's books were torn and flung about as treasonable and seditious trash, by the zealous parish-officers or their assistants. A quantity of his ale was drunk up in healths to the King and Peveril of the Peak. And, finally, the boys, who bore the ex-parson no good-will for his tyrannical interference with their games at skittles, foot-ball, and so forth, and, moreover, remembered the unmerciful length of his sermons, dressed up an effigy with his Geneva gown and band, and his steeple-crowned hat, which they paraded through the village, and burned on the spot whilom occupied by a stately Maypole, which Solsgrace had formerly hewed down with his own reverend hands.

Sir Geoffrey was vexed at all this, and sent to Mr. Solsgrace, offering satisfaction for the goods which he had lost; but the Calvinistical divine replied, "From a thread to a shoe-latchet, I will not take any thing that is thine. Let the shame of the work of thy hands abide with thee."

Considerable scandal, indeed, arose against Sir Geoffrey Peveril as having proceeded with indecent severity and haste upon this occasion; and rumor took care to make the usual additions to the reality. It was currently reported, that the desperate Cavalier, Peveril of the Peak, had fallen on a Presbyterian congregation, while engaged in the peaceable exercise of religion, with a band of armed men—had slain some, desperately wounded many more, and finally pursued the preacher to his vicarage, which he burned to the ground. Some alleged the clergyman had perished in the flames; and the most mitigated report bore, that he had only been able to escape by disposing his gown, cap, and band, near a window, in such a manner as to deceive them with the idea of his person being still surrounded by flames, while he himself fled by the back part of the house. And although few people believed in the extent of the atrocities thus imputed to our honest Cavalier, yet still enough of obloquy attached to him to infer very serious consequences, as the reader will learn at a future period of our history.

#### CHAPTER IX.

*Devon.*—"Tis a challenge, sir, is it not?  
*Gentleman.*—"Tis an inviting to the field."  
KING AND NO KING.

For a day or two after this forcible expulsion from the vicarage, Mr. Solsgrace continued his residence at Moultrassie Hall, where the natural melancholy attendant on his situation added to the gloom of the owner of the mansion. In the morning, the ejected divine made excursions to different families in the neighborhood, to whom his ministry had been acceptable in the days of his prosperity, and from whose grateful recollections of that period he now found sympathy and

consolation. He did not require to be consoled with, because he was deprived of an easy and competent maintenance, and thrust out upon the common of life, after he had reason to suppose he would be no longer liable to such mutations of fortune. The piety of Mr. Solsgrace was sincere; and if he had many of the uncharitable prejudices against other sects, which polemical controversy had generated, and the Civil War brought to a head, he had also that deep sense of duty, by which enthusiasm is so often dignified, and held his very life little, if called upon to lay it down in attestation of the doctrines in which he believed. But he was soon to prepare for leaving the district which Heaven, he conceived, had assigned to him as his corner of the vineyard; he was to abandon his flock to the wolf—was to forsake those with whom he had held sweet counsel in religious communion—was to leave the recently converted to relapse into false doctrines, and forsake the wavering, whom his continued cares might have directed into the right path,—these were of themselves deep causes of sorrow, and were aggravated, doubtless, by those natural feelings with which all men, especially those whose duties or habits have confined them to a limited circle, regard the separation from wonted scenes, and their accustomed haunts of solitary musings, or social intercourse.

There was, indeed, a plan of placing Mr. Solsgrace at the head of a non-conforming congregation in his present parish, which his followers would have readily consented to endow with a sufficient revenue. But although the act for universal conformity was not yet passed, such a measure was understood to be impending, and there existed a general opinion among the Presbyterians, that in no hands was it likely to be more strictly enforced, than in those of Peveril of the Peak. Solsgrace himself considered not only his personal danger as being considerable,—for, assuming perhaps more consequence than was actually attached to him or his productions, he conceived the honest Knight to be his mortal and determined enemy,—but he also conceived that he should serve the cause of his church by abdicating himself from Derbyshire.

"Less known pastors," he said, "though perhaps more worthy of the name, may be permitted to assemble the scattered flocks in caverns or in secret wilds, and to them shall the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim be better than the vintage of Abiezer. But I, that have so often carried the banner forth against the mighty—I, whose tongue hath testified, morning and evening, like the watchman upon the tower, against Popery, Prelacy, and the tyrant of the Peak—for me to abide here, were but to bring the sword of bloody vengeance amongst you, that the shepherd might be smitten, and the sheep scattered. The shedders of blood have already assailed me, even within that ground which they themselves call consecrated; and yourselves have seen the scalp of the righteous broken, as he defended my

cause. Therefore, I will put on my sandals, and gird my loins, and depart to a far country, and there do as my duty shall call upon me, whether it be to act or to suffer—to bear testimony at the stake or in the pulpit."

Such were the sentiments which Mr. Solsgrace expressed to his desponding friends, and which he expatiated upon at more length with Major Bridgenorth; not failing, with friendly zeal, to rebuke the haste which the latter had shown to thrust out the hand of fellowship to the Amalek-ite woman, whereby he reminded him, "He had been rendered her slave and bondsman for a season, like Samson, betrayed by Delilah, and might have remained longer in the house of Dagon, had not Heaven pointed to him a way out of the snare. Also, it sprung originally from the Major's going up to feast in the high place of Baal, that he who was the champion of the truth was stricken down, and put to shame by the enemy, even in the presence of the host."

These objurgations seeming to give some offence to Major Bridgenorth, who liked, no better than any other man, to hear of his own mishaps, and at the same time to have them imputed to his own misconduct, the worthy divine proceeded to take shame to himself for his own sinful compliance in that matter; for to the vengeance justly due for that unhappy dinner at Martindale Castle (which was, he said, a crying of peace when there was no peace, and a dwelling in the tents of sin), he imputed his ejection from his living, with the destruction of some of his most pithy and highly prized volumes of divinity, with the loss of his cap, gown, and band, and a double hogsheaf of choice Derby ale.

The mind of Major Bridgenorth was strongly tinged with devotional feeling, which his late misfortunes had rendered more deep and solemn; and it is therefore no wonder, that, when he heard these arguments urged again and again, by a pastor whom he so much respected, and who was now a confessor in the cause of their joint faith, he began to look back with disapproval on his own conduct, and to suspect that he had permitted himself to be seduced by gratitude towards Lady Peveril, and by her special arguments in favor of a mutual and tolerating liberality of sentiments, into an action which had a tendency to compromise his religious and political principles.

One morning, as Major Bridgenorth had wearied himself with several details respecting the arrangement of his affairs, he was reposing in the leathern easy-chair, beside the latticed window, a posture which, by natural association, recalled to him the memory of former times, and the feelings with which he was wont to expect the recurring visit of Sir Geoffrey, who brought him news of his child's welfare.—"Surely," he said, thinking, as it were, aloud, "there was no sin in the kindness with which I then regarded that man."

Solsgrace, who was in the apartment, and guessed what passed through his friend's mind



acquainted as he was with every point of his history, replied—"When God caused Elijah to be fed by ravens, while hiding at the brook Cherith, we hear not of his fondling the unclean birds, whom, contrary to their ravening nature, a miracle compelled to minister to him."

"It may be so," answered Bridgenorth, "yet the flap of their wings must have been gracious in the ear of the famished prophet, like the tread of his horse in mine. The ravens, doubtless, resumed their nature when the season was passed, and even so it has fared with him.—Hark!" he exclaimed, starting, "I hear his horse's hoof-tramp even now."

It was seldom that the echoes of that silent house and court-yard were awakened by the tramping of horses, but such was now the case.

Both Bridgenorth and Solsgrace were surprised at the sound, and even disposed to anticipate some farther oppression on the part of government, when the Major's old servant introduced, with little ceremony (for his manners were nearly as plain as his master's), a tall gentleman, on the farther side of middle life, whose vest and cloak, long hair, slouched hat and drooping feather, announced him as a Cavalier. He bowed formally, but courteously, to both gentlemen, and said that he was "Sir Jasper Cranbourne, charged with an especial message to Master Ralph Bridgenorth of Moultrassie-Hall, by his honorable friend Sir Geoffrey Peveril of the Peak, and that he requested to know whether Master Bridgenorth would be pleased to receive his acquittal of commission here or elsewhere."

"Any thing which Sir Geoffrey Peveril can have to say to me," said Major Bridgenorth, "may be told instantly, and before my friend, from whom I have no secrets."

"The presence of any other friend were, instead of being objectionable, the thing in the world most to be desired," said Sir Jasper, after a moment's hesitation, and looking at Mr. Solsgrace; "but this gentleman seems to be a sort of clergyman."

"I am not conscious of any secrets," answered Bridgenorth, "nor do I desire to have any in which a clergyman is an unfitting confidant."

"At your pleasure," replied Sir Jasper. "The confidence, for aught I know, may be well enough chosen, for your divines (always under your favor) have proved no enemies to such matters as I am to treat with you upon."

"Proceed, sir," answered Mr. Bridgenorth, gravely; "and I pray you to be seated, unless it is rather your pleasure to stand."

"I must, in the first place, deliver myself of my small commission," answered Sir Jasper, drawing himself up; "and it will be after I have seen the reception thereof, that I shall know whether I am, or am not, to sit down at Moultrassie-Hall.—Sir Geoffrey Peveril, Master Bridgenorth, hath carefully considered with himself the unhappy circumstances which at present separate you as neighbors. And he remembers many

passages in former times—I speak his very words—which incline him to do all that can possibly consist with his honor, to wipe out unkindness between you; and for this desirable object, he is willing to condescend in a degree, which, as you could not have expected, it will no doubt give you great pleasure to learn."

"Allow me to say, Sir Jasper," said Bridgenorth, "that this is unnecessary. I have made no complaints of Sir Geoffrey—I have required no submission from him—I am about to leave this country; and what affairs we may have together, can be as well settled by others as by ourselves."

"In a word," said the divine, "the worthy Major Bridgenorth hath had enough of trafficking with the ungodly, and will no longer, on any terms, consort with them."

"Gentlemen both," said Sir Jasper, with imperturbable politeness, bowing, "you greatly mistake the tenor of my commission, which you will do as well to hear out, before making any reply to it.—I think, Master Bridgenorth, you cannot but remember your letter to the Lady Peveril, of which I have here a rough copy, in which you complain of the hard measure which you have received at Sir Geoffrey's hand, and, in particular, when he pulled you from your horse at or near Hartley-nick. Now Sir Geoffrey thinks so well of you, as to believe, that, were it not for the wide difference betwixt his descent and rank and your own, you would have sought to bring this matter to a gentleman-like arbitrament as the only mode whereby your stain may be honorably wiped away. Wherefore, in this slight note, he gives you, in his generosity, the offer of what you, in your modesty (for to nothing else does he impute your acquiescence), have declined to demand of him. And withal, I bring you the measure of his weapon; and when you have accepted the cartel which I now offer you, I shall be ready to settle the time, place, and other circumstances of your meeting."

"And I," said Solsgrace, with a solemn voice, "should the Author of Evil tempt my friend to accept of so bloodthirsty a proposal, would be the first to pronounce against him sentence of the greater excommunication."

"It is not you whom I address, reverend sir," replied the envoy; "your interest, not unnaturally, may determine you to be more anxious about your patron's life than about his honor. I must know, from himself, to which he is disposed to give the preference."

So saying, and with a graceful bow, he again tendered the challenge to Major Bridgenorth. There was obviously a struggle in that gentleman's bosom, between the suggestions of human honor and those of religious principle; but the latter prevailed. He calmly waived receiving the paper which Sir Jasper offered to him, and spoke to the following purpose:—"It may not be known to you, Sir Jasper, that since the general pouring out of Christian light upon this kingdom, many

solid men have been led to doubt whether the shedding human blood by the hand of a fellow-creature be in any respect justifiable. And although this rule appears to me to be scarcely applicable to our state in this stage of trial, seeing that such non-resistance, if general, would surrender our civil and religious rights into the hands of whatsoever daring tyrants might usurp the same; yet I am, and have been, inclined to limit the use of carnal arms to the case of necessary self-defence, whether such regards our own person, or the protection of our country against invasion; or of our rights of property, and the freedom of our laws and of our conscience, against usurping power. And as I have never shown myself unwilling to draw my sword in any of the latter causes, so you shall excuse my suffering it now to remain in the scabbard, when, having sustained a grievous injury, the man who inflicted it summons me to combat, either upon an idle punctilio, or, as is more likely, in mere bravado."

"I have heard you with patience," said Sir Jasper; "and now, Master Bridgenorth, take it not amiss, if I beseech you to bethink yourself better on this matter. I vow to Heaven, sir, that your honor lies a-bleeding; and that in condescending to afford you this fair meeting, and thereby giving you some chance to stop its wounds, Sir Geoffrey has been moved by a tender sense of your condition, and an earnest wish to redeem your dishonor. And it will be but the crossing of your blade with his honored sword for the space of some few minutes, and you will either live or die a noble and honored gentleman. Besides, that the Knight's exquisite skill of fence may enable him, as his good-nature will incline him, to disarm you with some flesh wound, little to the damage of your person, and greatly to the benefit of your reputation."

"The tender mercies of the wicked," said Master Solsgrace, emphatically, by way of commenting on this speech, which Sir Jasper had uttered very pathetically, "are cruel."

"I pray to have no farther interruption from your reverence," said Sir Jasper; "especially as I think this affair very little concerns you; and I entreat that you permit me to discharge myself regularly of my commission from my worthy friend."

So saying, he took his sheathed rapier from his belt, and passing the point through the silk thread which secured the letter, he once more, and literally at sword point, gracefully tendered it to Major Bridgenorth, who again waived it aside, though coloring deeply at the same time, as if he was putting a marked constraint upon himself—drew back, and made Sir Jasper Cranbourne a deep bow.

"Since it is to be thus," said Sir Jasper, "I must myself do violence to the seal of Sir Geoffrey's letter, and read it to you, that I may fully acquit myself of the charge intrusted to me, and make you, Master Bridgenorth, equally aware of

the generous intentions of Sir Geoffrey on your behalf."

"If," said Major Bridgenorth, "the contents of the letter be to no other purpose than you have intimated, methinks farther ceremony is unnecessary on this occasion, as I have already taken my course."

"Nevertheless," said Sir Jasper, breaking open the letter, "it is fitting that I read to you the letter of my worshipful friend." And he read accordingly as follows:

*For the worthy hands of Ralph Bridgenorth, Esquire, of Moultrassie-Hall—These:*

"By the honored conveyance of the Worshipful Sir Jasper Cranbourne, Knight of Long-Malington.

"MASTER BRIDGENORTH,

"We have been given to understand by your letter to our loving wife, Dame Margaret Peveril, that you hold hard construction of certain passages betwixt you and I, of a late date, as if your honor should have been, in some sort, prejudiced by what then took place. And although you have not thought it fit to have direct recourse to me, to request such satisfaction as is due from one gentleman of condition to another, yet I am fully minded that this proceeds only from modesty, arising out of the distinction of our degree, and from no lack of that courage which you have heretofore displayed, I would I could say in a good cause. Wherefore I am purposed to give you, by my friend, Sir Jasper Cranbourne, a meeting, for the sake of doing that which doubtless you entirely long for. Sir Jasper will deliver you the length of my weapon, and appoint circumstances and an hour for our meeting; which, whether early or late—on foot or horseback—with rapier or backsword—I refer to yourself, with all the other privileges of a challenged person; only desiring, that if you decline to match my weapon, you will send me forthwith the length and breadth of your own. And nothing doubting that the issue of this meeting must needs be to end, in one way or other, all unkindness betwixt two near neighbors,

"I remain,

"Your humble servant to command,

"GEOFFREY PEVERIL OF THE PEAK.

"Given from my poor house of Martindale Castle, this same — of —, sixteen hundred and sixty."

"Bear back my respects to Sir Geoffrey Peveril," said Major Bridgenorth. "According to his light, his meaning may be fair toward me; but tell him that our quarrel had its rise in his own wilful aggression towards me; and that though I wish to be in charity with all mankind, I am not so wedded to his friendship as to break the laws of God, and run the risk of suffering or committing murder, in order to regain it. And for you, sir, methinks your advanced years and past misfortunes might teach you the folly of coming on such idle errands."